

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A nonwoven fabric characterized by being an aggregate of filaments composed of a thermoplastic polymer, and by having a mean fiber size of 0.1-20 μm , wherein any given lateral cross-section of each of the filaments is an irregular shape, and a mean apparent density in the range of 10-95 kg/m^3 .

2. (currently amended): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein said irregular shape is at least one type selected from the group consisting of ~~fine~~ 0.1-1 μm pits on the filament surfaces, ~~fine~~ 0.1-1 μm protrusions on the filament surfaces, pits formed in a linear fashion in the fiber axis direction on the filament surfaces, protrusions formed in a linear fashion in the fiber axis direction on the filament surfaces and micropores in the filament surfaces.

3. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein the mean fiber size is 0.1-5 μm .

4. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein the nonwoven fabric thickness is 100 μm or greater.

5. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic polymer is a polymer which is soluble in a volatile solvent.

6. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 5, wherein the thermoplastic polymer which is soluble in a volatile solvent is an aliphatic polyester.

7. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 6, wherein the aliphatic polyester is polylactic acid.

8. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 5, wherein the volatile solvent is a mixed solvent comprising a volatile good solvent and a volatile poor solvent.

9. (currently amended): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 8, wherein the ratio of the volatile poor solvent and volatile good solvent in said mixed solvent is in the range of (23:77) to (40:60), based on weight.

10. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 8, wherein the volatile good solvent is a halogen-containing hydrocarbon.

11. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 8, wherein the volatile poor solvent is a lower alcohol.

12. (original): A nonwoven fabric according to claim 11, wherein the lower alcohol is ethanol.

13. (withdrawn): A process for production of a nonwoven fabric, according to claim 1, which comprises a step wherein a thermoplastic polymer is dissolved in a mixed solvent composed of a volatile good solvent and a volatile poor solvent, a step wherein the resulting solution is spun by an electrospinning method and a step wherein a nonwoven fabric accumulated on a collecting sheet is obtained, which process yields a nonwoven fabric with a mean fiber size of 0.1-20 μm , wherein any given lateral cross-section of said filaments is irregular, and a mean apparent density in the range of 10-95 kg/m^3 .

14. (withdrawn): A process for production of a nonwoven fabric according to claim 13, wherein the ratio of the volatile poor solvent and volatile good solvent in said mixed solvent is in the range of (23:77) to (40:60), based on weight.

15. (withdrawn): A process for production of a nonwoven fabric according to claim 13, wherein the volatile good solvent is a halogen-containing hydrocarbon.

16. (withdrawn): A process for production of a nonwoven fabric according to claim 13, wherein the volatile poor solvent is a lower alcohol.

17. (withdrawn): A process for production of a nonwoven fabric according to claim 16, wherein the lower alcohol is ethanol.